

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOLDING. The deliberate targeting of conservative groups by the IRS is inexcusable, and it raises serious red flags about the agency's abuse of power.

Mr. Speaker, what we see here is an institutional arrogance within the IRS. The American people should be able to trust that the agency responsible for collecting their hard-earned tax dollars will not discriminate against them based on their values or political views. While the Obama administration would have us believe that the IRS' targeting of conservative groups was the result of an increase in the number of non-profit applications, the data clearly reveal this to be simply untrue.

As if the targeting of conservative groups weren't bad enough, the IRS will also soon become the enforcer of ObamaCare—with the very same person previously in charge of the tax-exempt division at the IRS now in charge of the ObamaCare enforcement division.

Mr. Speaker, we need accountability from this agency and this administration. The American people demand it.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. COSTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, for the first time in recent history, Congress has a real opportunity to pass comprehensive legislation to fix our broken immigration system.

Legislation being backed by a bipartisan group of Senators has done what many previous proposals have failed to do, and that is to gain broad support and to balance the needs of all of the interests of our country. I have been working closely with Members on both sides of the aisle in the House and in the Senate and with agricultural organizations and farm workers to make sure that the concerns of California's agricultural communities are met. The Senate's plan provides a legal and stable workforce for agricultural and critical protections for those who work very hard every day to put safe, healthy food on our Nation's dinner tables. Without these provisions, it would have been a deal-breaker for our valley.

Naysayers might say it's time to wait, but that's motivated simply by political interests, not reality. It's time for immigration reform now. It's time for the House to act and to come together. It's time to pass this bipartisan effort to fix America's broken immigration system.

□ 1230

THE KEYSTONE PIPELINE

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, it's been almost 5 years since the application to build the Keystone XL pipeline was filed. It's also been almost 5 years that Americans have been waiting for the jobs and energy security Keystone would provide. How much longer will President Obama make us wait?

American families expect our government to pursue the least expensive, most reliable domestic energy. Jobless Americans expect that their President won't stand in the way of economic relief. But on both fronts, President Obama's choice to cede to environmental special interests and block the Keystone pipeline in 2011 did the opposite. It denied thousands of jobless Americans the chance at high-paying work and blocked a direct connection between refineries in Texas and affordable energy in Canada.

But what's more audacious about the President's economically indefensible action is the fact that it is groundless. The President's own State Department concluded "no significant" environmental damage would be caused by Keystone's completion.

The Keystone pipeline has jobs to offer. Why is the President turning those jobs away?

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS

(Ms. WILSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it's now been 870 days since I arrived in Congress, and the Republican leadership has still not allowed a single vote on serious legislation to address our unemployment crisis.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an exaggeration to say that unemployment is a matter of life and death. In a new study, researchers at Oxford and Stanford found that approximately 4,750 suicides in the United States between 2007 and 2010 were attributed to unemployment.

Now here in America, the sequester is slated to cut billions in nutrition subsidies, medical research, cancer clinics, low-income heating, and other lifesaving services. If we continue to cut jobs because of the sequester, Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear: the sequester kills.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to bring H.R. 900, the Cancel the Sequester Act, to the floor for a vote. It is time to turn our attention back to jobs with the President's American Jobs Act.

Our mantra, Mr. Speaker, should be: job, jobs, jobs.

AMERICAN ENERGY PRODUCTION

(Mr. MILLER of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, our economy continues to struggle, with nearly 12 million of our fellow Americans remaining out of work.

Why, then, does the President still insist on standing in the way of creating new jobs by expanding America's energy sector by using all of our valuable resources—water, wind, solar, gas, and oil?

More American energy production would create jobs and grow our economy, in addition to lowering energy costs for hardworking Americans and strengthening our national security. These are the kind of goals that all Americans, Republican and Democrat, should be able to get behind.

But this President is clearly not serious about creating new jobs. He still has refused to approve the Keystone pipeline which would create 20,000 new jobs in America right away. It's been over 1,700 days. We've waited long enough. It's time to build the pipeline. It's time to create jobs.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

MAY 21, 2013.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker, The Capitol, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in clause 2(h) of rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on May 21, 2013 at 9:45 a.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 309.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

IMPROVING JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS ACT OF 2013

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1412) to improve and increase the availability of on-job training and apprenticeship programs carried out by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1412

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Improving Job Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2013".

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF PRIVATE SECTOR ON-JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS.

During the four-year period beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out section 3677(b)(1)(A) of title 38, United States Code, by substituting “75 per centum” for “85 per centum”.

SEC. 3. ON-JOB TRAINING AT FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES.

Beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into agreements with the heads of other Federal departments and agencies to operate programs of training on the job under section 3677 of title 38, United States Code, to train eligible veterans or persons to perform skills necessary for employment by the department or agency operating the program.

SEC. 4. EXTENSION OF REDUCED PENSION FOR CERTAIN VETERANS COVERED BY MEDICAID PLANS FOR SERVICES FURNISHED BY NURSING FACILITIES.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “November 30, 2016” and inserting “December 31, 2016”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

H.R. 1412, as amended, is another product of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs' work to improve the effectiveness of GI Bill benefits for veterans.

I want to express my appreciation to the Subcommittee Chairman BILL FLORES, Ranking Member MARK TAKANO, and our new full committee Ranking Member MIKE MICHAUD for working with us to bring this amended bill to the full House.

In general, H.R. 1412, as amended, responds to concerns about how to ensure that veterans make the best use of their hard-earned GI Bill benefits. Specifically, H.R. 1412 improves the GI Bill's on-the-job training option that offers veterans the opportunity to gain work experience and at the same time offers employers a lower cost while the veteran undergoes their training.

The bill, as amended, has two major sections. Section 2 would reduce the final required training salary of a veteran engaged with an employer's on-the-job training apprenticeship program from the current 85 percent of the fully trained wage for the job to 75 percent. This new requirement would be put in place for a period of 4 years, following the effective date of this section. The temporary decrease in the wage requirement will provide more employers the flexibility to offer OJT programs when they otherwise would not have been able to do so.

Section 3 would direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to conclude agreements with other Federal agencies to have them further participate in the OJT program. If we're going to

ask private employers to offer more opportunities to our veterans, the Federal Government ought to lead by example.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is another step in reducing the unemployment rate among our veterans and is fully paid for. I greatly appreciate the bipartisan manner in which our colleagues have worked to reach an accord on the final provisions of this bill, and I encourage all Members to support the bill.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First of all, I want to thank the chairman of the full committee for all his hard work and for working in a bipartisan manner not only on this piece of legislation but all of the bills that we've been dealing with in the committee this Congress.

I rise today in support of H.R. 1412, as amended, the Improving Job Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2013. I want to thank Mr. COFFMAN for introducing this legislation. I also want to thank committee Chairman MILLER and subcommittee Chairman Mr. FLORES and Ranking Member TAKANO for their leadership in assisting and bringing this bill before us today.

In these challenging employment markets, we need to use all available means to assist our veterans in obtaining the training that they need to find a good paying job. H.R. 1412 assists veterans by improving and increasing the VA's on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs.

In these programs, a veteran employee's salary is paid in part by the employer and in part by the VA, with not less than 50 percent being paid by the program. As a veteran completes the apprenticeship and becomes a fully qualified employee, the employer pays an increasing percentage of the salary, eventually assuming all of it.

H.R. 1412 reduces slightly the percentage of the salary the employer pays near the end of the training program. This eases the burden on the employers and is an incentive to employers to increase the number of veterans in the program. The Veterans' Affairs Committee will be closely monitoring this program to ensure that more veterans are being offered training opportunities as a result.

□ 1240

Mr. Speaker, we know that on-the-job training and apprenticeship is a highly efficient and cost-effective means of connecting veterans with meaningful, long-term employment. This is good for both veterans and employers. H.R. 1412 enhances the opportunities for both, making it easier for companies to employ veterans and for veterans to find new jobs and careers.

Unfortunately, however, too few employers know about this program and how to connect to it. As we pass this legislation, I encourage the VA to do more to inform employers and veterans about the benefits of this program.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN), the author of the bill and a stalwart supporter of America's veterans.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member MICHAUD for their leadership on the committee. Their efforts to advance this important bill will help veterans who are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan find jobs.

As a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and as a Marine Corps combat veteran myself, it is important to me and to our country that we take care of those who have served this Nation after they come home from war.

Our veterans have great skills when it comes to working as a member of a team and getting the job done; but, unfortunately, in many instances, their technical skills aren't readily transferable to civilian occupations. The Bureau of Labor Statistics stated that the unemployment rate for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans between the ages of 20 and 24 was 19 percent in April. This is why I am happy to have my legislation, H.R. 1412, the Improving Job Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2013, on the floor today for a vote.

This legislation seeks to increase the availability of on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs to help veterans make the transition into the civilian workforce. This legislation will build on an existing, yet little known and underutilized, on-the-job training program that allows veterans to use their educational benefits they earned through their military service to learn a trade or skill by participating in an approved apprenticeship or on-the-job training program.

There are two pillars of this legislation. The first is it will decrease the final percentage of the veteran's salary paid by the employer from 85 to 75 percent as a means to further incentivize employers to participate. Secondly, the legislation will expand this training program by requiring the VA to enter into agreements with other Federal agencies to expand on-the-job training opportunities throughout the Federal Government.

This legislation will be a great tool for both private sector and Federal employers to hire our veterans who are struggling to make that transition from the military to the civilian workforce. Employers in Colorado have already explained to me how beneficial this legislation can be for their operations because they know that hiring veterans is a proven bonus. They know that veterans are hardworking, team-oriented, and quick learners who are capable of gaining highly technical skills that are prevalent in many industries today.

For example, the CEO of Tri-State Generation in Colorado, based in my

home district, told me that the Improving Job Opportunities for Veterans Act will add to his company's existing outreach to our veterans. Currently, they employ 150 veterans. Now they will do even more. I applaud their efforts and of other companies who want to hire vets.

I hope this bill helps employers connect to the great pool of talent of those returning from military service.

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO).

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maine for yielding.

I rise today to support the increased job opportunities embodied in H.R. 1412 and the changes it makes to the on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs at the Department of Veterans Affairs. I want to thank the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN) for introducing this bill and the Veterans' Affairs Committee leadership, Chairman MILLER, Ranking Member MICHAUD, and subcommittee Chairman FLORES for moving this bill through committee.

This legislation will expand access for veterans to on-the-job training and apprenticeships, and assist employers in hiring veterans who have shown time and again that their real-world experience, leadership, and countless other skills are great resources for American companies. By reducing the percentage of salary paid to a veteran participating in one of these programs, this bill would make it more attractive for companies to hire veterans doing on-the-job training and apprenticeships.

It is our hope that these opportunities will help bridge the employment gaps veterans are currently experiencing. Unfortunately, it is also clear from our subcommittee work that the Department of Veterans Affairs could be doing a better job advertising this great benefit. The more veterans and employers know about these benefits, the more opportunities veterans can have in the job market.

I am proud to support this legislation and urge my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to support it as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the bipartisan spirit of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, we have no more speakers at this time, and so if Mr. MICHAUD is ready to close, we are prepared to close.

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I, too, have no further Members who wish to speak, but I do want to, in closing, emphasize that veterans are an asset to any organization, whether it is in the private or public sector. They make the organization better, and they improve the bottom line. This bill is very timely and is very important for our veterans.

I also want to thank, once again, Mr. TAKANO for his leadership on this issue. In his life before he became a Member

of Congress, he was in the community college system, and he knows about training and how important apprenticeship programs are. So I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again I encourage all Members to support H.R. 1412, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise in support of H.R. 1412, The Improving Job Opportunities for Veterans Act.

This bipartisan bill helps our Nation's veterans get the training they need to build a stronger future.

It improves and increases the awareness and availability of on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs.

After all they have sacrificed for our country, we should do our part to ensure veterans have good training and good job opportunities.

I thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle—Mr. COFFMAN and Mr. TAKANO—for introducing this bill.

Helping our veterans isn't a partisan issue—it's a national responsibility.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1412, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

AMERICAN HEROES COLA ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 570) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 570

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "American Heroes COLA Act".

SEC. 2. AUTOMATIC ANNUAL INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) INDEXING TO SOCIAL SECURITY INCREASES.—Section 5312 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d)(1) Whenever there is an increase in benefit amounts payable under title II of the

Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) as a result of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)), the Secretary shall, effective on the date of such increase in benefit amounts, increase the dollar amounts in effect for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation by the Secretary, as specified in paragraph (2), as such amounts were in effect immediately before the date of such increase in benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act, by the same percentage as the percentage by which such benefit amounts are increased, but only if such percentage increase is calculated using the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers.

"(2) The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to paragraph (1) are the following:

"(A) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1114 of this title.

"(B) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1115(1) of this title.

"(C) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount in effect under section 1162 of this title.

"(D) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

"(E) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

"(3) Whenever there is an increase under paragraph (1) in amounts in effect for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation, the Secretary shall publish such amounts, as increased pursuant to such paragraph, in the Federal Register at the same time as the material required by section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) is published by reason of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

"(4) During the period beginning on the date of the enactment of this subsection and ending on September 30, 2018, each dollar amount increased under paragraph (1), if not a whole dollar amount, shall be rounded to the next lower whole dollar amount.

"(5) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of this title."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (d) of section 5312 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) of this section, shall take effect on December 1, 2014.

SEC. 3. INCREASE IN RATE OF SPECIAL MONTHLY COMPENSATION FOR SEVERELY INJURED VETERANS.

(a) INCREASE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 1114(r) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking "\$2,002" and inserting "\$3,163"; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking "\$2,983" and inserting "\$4,713".

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on December 1, 2014.

(b) TEMPORARY RATES.—During the period beginning on December 1, 2014, and ending on September 30, 2018, section 1114(r) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), shall be applied—

(1) in paragraph (1), by substituting "\$2,742" for "\$3,163"; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by substituting "\$4085" for "\$4,713".